Conjuring the hereafter

An evaluation of *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* at the British Museum

March 2011

This is an online version of a report prepared by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre for the British Museum. Commercially sensitive information has been removed.
Conjuring the hereafter: An evaluation of *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* at the British Museum

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The exhibition used an **immersive mix of interpretation** approaches and new media that effectively communicated the themes covered.

Visitors reached **deep levels of engagement** and particularly had an unexpected desire to **reflect** and **contemplate** on the journey.

The exhibition will have a strong **lasting legacy** by attracting a new audience with a desire to return and supporting the Museum’s existing temporary exhibitions brand.
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Executive Summary

A successful and engaging exhibition, in-keeping with the British Museum’s ability to stage high quality temporary exhibitions.

The Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead exhibition attracted a high proportion of repeat visitors when compared to other Reading Room exhibitions and was only exceeded by Hadrian: Empire & Conflict (24 July – 26 October 2008). The Museum has built up a strong brand for staging temporary exhibitions, resulting in relatively high cross over between exhibitions and repeat visiting.

Visitor dwell time was higher than at all other Reading Room exhibitions at 116 minutes. Visitors were surprised by how much there was to see, and their engagement was facilitated by the exhibition design.

A broad range of ages and significant domestic audience.

The exhibition attracted a broad age range of visitors compared to previous Reading Room exhibitions. A slightly higher proportion of visitors came from elsewhere in the UK, outside London (45%) and fewer overseas visitors were present, however this is likely due to seasonal patterns in overseas visitors. The knowledge base in visitors was similar to previous exhibitions with 69% citing general and 8% citing specialist knowledge of the subjects covered.

Innovative approach using new media.

The Museum has had success in embedding new media within its supporting material and marketing campaigns. 19% of visitors had seen the promotional video, 15% had used the multimedia guides and 9% were aware of the exhibition iPhone app available to download. Materials such as these portray the Museum as an innovative and modern organisation, and the app and multimedia guides allow visitors to tailor their visit, in some cases giving them more confidence to explore and making the content more accessible, in others allowing them to delve deeper into areas of interest.
An immersive mix of interpretative approaches.

Audio-visual displays were used extensively throughout the exhibition and were praised by visitors, they liked that it provided a break from reading and was a user-friendly way of communicating information. The exhibition design also facilitated understanding of the themes to the exhibition, successfully communicating the idea of a journey using subtle changes in light and sound and the ‘sectioning’ of areas took visitors through a natural progression.

Visitors were highly satisfied with the amount of information available, however some would have appreciated more context and background to the exhibition, specifically what they were about to see, an introduction to the Book of the Dead itself and more general details about the Egyptian culture, conservation and preservation.

First-time family visitors were attracted to the exhibition.

New family visitors were attracted to the exhibition (24% of families were on their first visit to the Museum) some of whom hadn’t seen the British Museum as a destination for families before. This indicates a successful targeted marketing campaign raising awareness of the family-specific events programme, which provided an additional means of engagement. It also illustrates that the exhibition strengthened the Museum’s brand amongst family visitors.

However, there was a sense among family visitors that the exhibition was only really suitable for children over a certain age and that it would have been useful for the Museum to more clearly communicate this. Parents of younger children tended to be pressured through the exhibition by their children intent on collecting the spells, thus preventing the visiting group from engaging more deeply.

Intellectually engaging for families whilst non-families achieved deeper emotional and spiritual outcomes.

The vast majority of family visitors were mainly driven by intellectual motivations, and the exhibition largely delivered these outcomes. In fact there was little shift up the hierarchy among family visitors suggesting that they were accurately anticipating what they wanted to get out of the experience, and revealing a strong supporting marketing campaign. This finding is however also supportive of the idea that some families struggled to engage more deeply due to their children being too young to appreciate the content.
This compares to non-family visitors, who appeared to engage on a deeper emotional or spiritual level than they were anticipating, and many had their expectations exceeded rather than met. In particular non-families were encouraged to reflect and contemplate to a deeper level than they were expecting. Many drew parallels and contrasts between the Egyptian belief system and their own and explored the themes of life after death and ancient civilizations.

**Overcrowding, particularly at the start of the exhibition caused a problem for some.**

Despite the powerful experience described by many visitors, there is a sense that with this exhibition in particular overcrowding in certain areas detracted from the visit experience. This was noticeably a reported problem during the first few sections of the exhibition when visitors had to queue to see artefacts – some of which required close attention to detail in order to engage. Reviewing where certain elements were placed could help alleviate this problem in future, for example introductory panels to each section could be located further away from doorways, and corner displays could be reserved for larger artefacts.

Whilst overcrowding caused frustration among visitors, in a positive light it also helped to generate the sense of a journey, with visitors emerging the other side into a contrasting and open space of the exhibition’s finale.

**A strong legacy; visitors are more likely to visit future exhibitions and the Museum in general.**

The results suggest that the exhibition will have a strong lasting legacy. The new audience that has been attracted by the exhibition is highly motivated to come back and see future temporary exhibitions (64% of first-timers were more likely to as a result of their experience as compared to 54% of all visitors), and visit the Museum in general (51% first-timers as compared to 38% all visitors).

Both family and non-family visitors left with an appetite for more. Over half (55%) of the audience were motivated to visit the Museum’s related galleries and 42% were motivated to find out about the surrounding events and activities programme. The positive experience felt by visitors will also help drive significant traffic to the Museum website, with 50% of the audience now more likely to visit the site following their visit.
2

Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead

Image: Weighing of the heart by Anubis, detail from the Book of the Dead of Ani. Egypt, c. 1275 BC © Trustees of the British Museum

This Reading Room exhibition showcased many previously unseen examples from the Book of the Dead – a collection of spells designed to guide the deceased through the dangers of the underworld.

The exhibition featured a mix of spells on papyrus linen, figurines, amulets, statues and coffins, and used a blend of interpretative approaches including both digital screens, a multimedia guide and more traditional text panels. Using a ‘journey’ structure, visitors to the exhibition were encouraged to move through the various stages of the netherworld to the Hall of Judgement and ultimately into the Field of Reeds.

The exhibition represented a once in a lifetime opportunity to see these objects gathered together, with some presented in their original form for the first time.

Running from 4 November 2010 – 6 March 2011 the exhibition was held in the Museum’s Reading Room and was sponsored by BP.
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*Schematic diagram of the Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead exhibition*
Research methodology

3.1 Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of this research were to provide an objective evaluation of the exhibition, comparative data across other British Museum Reading Room exhibitions – *Fra Angelico to Leonardo: Italian Renaissance Drawings; Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler; Shah ‘Abbas: The remaking of Iran; Hadrian: Empire and Conflict; The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army* – and specific findings relating to the Museum’s high level research agenda of Attract -> Engage -> Outcome.

Specific areas to be covered in the evaluation were:

- Visitor profile against British Museum general visitor profile
- Visitor behaviour
- Interpretation awareness and usage
- Accompanying programme awareness and usage
- Family offer
- Motivations, expectations and outcomes (including comparative work on outcomes against other exhibitions)
- Segmentation
- Access provision usage
- Website usage

3.2 Our approach

In order to carry out the evaluation of *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* we used the following research techniques:

**Audience focus groups**

Exhibition attenders were invited to the British Museum to take part in a focus group. All of the attenders had previously visited *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* and they were divided into families and non-families. Participants took part in an accompanied visit to the *Journey through*
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The *afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* exhibition to refresh their memories, before taking part in an in-depth group discussion. The discussions explored their expectations of the exhibition, aspects of the exhibition design and overall visitor experience.

In total 12 visitors participated in the focus group discussions: 6 family visitors and 6 non-family visitors.

Exit survey

Surveys were conducted with visitors who had just finished their visit to the exhibition to ascertain a basic visitor profile, awareness of marketing and publicity, motivation for visiting the exhibition, behaviour within the room and the impacts and outcomes of the exhibition. The exit survey also gathered detailed information about visitor spend, in order to assess the economic impact of *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*.

170 exit surveys with non-family visitors were completed during shifts from 22nd December 2010 to 22nd February 2011.

44 exit surveys with family visitors were completed during shifts from 22nd December 2010 to 22nd February 2011. An online survey was then set up due to difficulties reaching family visitors on-site. A further 45 surveys were completed online by family visitors after their visit. Online surveys were filled in from 23rd February to 9th March 2011. In total a sample of 89 family visitor surveys was achieved.

A note about weighting

The data was weighted based on information from the Museum about the numbers of family visitors instead of visitor flow overall. Therefore where visitors in general are discussed this data is weighted to be representative of all visitors in terms of the proportion of family and non-family visitors.

Rolling research

Questions were added to the on-going rolling research at the Museum to ascertain awareness and attendance of *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* amongst general Museum visitors.

Observations

The attracting power and dwell time for a series of AVs, accompanying objects and the Family Trail were measured in-house by a member of the British Museum staff. Every third visitor was tracked.

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1 Please note the research excluded schools and those visiting as part of an organised group.
Observations were conducted between 17th December 2010 and 3rd March 2011 at various times between 10am – 5pm on weekdays.

353 visitors were observed within the observations research this equates to between 50 and 52 in each section.

Vox pop interviews

Vox pop interviews were carried out at various points throughout the exhibition in order to test visitors’ responses to different elements including the multimedia guides and the overall exhibition design and interpretation. There were family specific vox pops conducted on family days.

91 visitor vox pops were carried out.
Key findings

The table below shows the key findings from the *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* exhibition, and compares them with 5 other Reading Room exhibitions at the British Museum that have been evaluated by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Book of the Dead</th>
<th>Italian Renaissance Drawings</th>
<th>Moctezuma</th>
<th>Shah 'Abbas</th>
<th>Hadrian</th>
<th>The First Emperor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition dates</td>
<td>04/11/10 – 06/03/11</td>
<td>22/04/10 – 25/07/10</td>
<td>24/09/09 – 24/01/10</td>
<td>19/02/09 – 14/06/09</td>
<td>26/07/08 – 26/10/08</td>
<td>13/09/07 – 06/04/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average length of visit</td>
<td>116 mins</td>
<td>91 mins</td>
<td>79 mins</td>
<td>75 mins</td>
<td>100 mins</td>
<td>75 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free exhibition guide use</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>19%²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Percentage rises to 89% according to British Museum guide take up statistics
Visitor profile

Where appropriate, and where comparative data is available, this report compares the findings from the *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* evaluation alongside those from the five previous major exhibitions to have taken place within the Reading Room.

It also compares the exhibition profile with the general Museum-visiting audience during the period of the exhibition (4 November 2010 – 6 March 2011).
### Visitor profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Book of the Dead</th>
<th>Italian Renaissance Drawings</th>
<th>Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler</th>
<th>Shah ‘Abbas</th>
<th>Hadrian: Empire &amp; Conflict</th>
<th>The First Emperor</th>
<th>BM overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base</strong></td>
<td>259</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intentional visiting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional visit to British Museum</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidental visit to British Museum</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of subject areas covered</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little/ none</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* question not included in survey
NB coding of origin hasn’t happened yet – will be added at a later date
Visitor origin

When the audience profile for *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* is compared to previous temporary exhibitions we can see that a slightly higher proportion of visitors from elsewhere in the UK attended. 22% of visitors came from overseas, a lower proportion as compared to previous Reading Room exhibitions. This result is likely to be related to seasonal patterns in overseas visitors, with the other comparable exhibitions tending to coincide more with spring and summer months (*Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler* is the exception to this) when overseas visiting to the British Museum is generally higher.

Visitor first language

82% of visitors spoke English as their first language. French was spoken by a further 4%; all other languages tested were the mother tongue of 2% or fewer visitors.

Families: visit history

![Diagram showing family and non-family visitors](image)

Family visitors were more likely to be on their first ever visit or returning after two or more years. Non-family visitors were more likely to be on a repeat visit within 12 months or 1 – 2 years.

There was a general perception among families from the qualitative research that the British Museum was not a place for them, instead preferring smaller venues or those perceived as more family-friendly and accessible such as the Horniman or Natural History Museum.

The exhibition helped to dispel some of this feeling among family visitors, leaving them more open to returning:

> *It was a first experience for me. I came kind of on the back of my son coming before on a school trip and he was very enthusiastic about it and wanted to***
revisit and show us so I was very impressed when I came through the door. I had heard about it but this happens to be one of the museums that I have not been to. I would definitely come back. If anything it has opened my eyes to what is here.

Knowledge base

Over two thirds of visitors claimed generalist knowledge of the subjects covered in the exhibition (69%), this is around average when looking at comparable Reading Room exhibitions. 8% described themselves as having specialist knowledge which is relatively consistent across comparable exhibitions, although higher than the proportion attracted by The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army (5%). The knowledge profile is most similar to that at Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler.
Segmentation

The table below describes the Morris Hargreaves McIntyre-devised segmentation system into which the British Museum audience is currently divided for annual reporting purposes.

**Segment table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Broad needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sightseers</td>
<td>First time visitors making a general visit. Mainly tourists who want to ‘do’ the museum</td>
<td>Ease of access, comfort, orientation, good facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self developers</td>
<td>Non-specialists wanting to informally improve their general knowledge about subjects covered in the museum</td>
<td>Journey of discovery, layered information, finding out new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families(^3)</td>
<td>Mixed age groups, wanting fun and educational trip for children</td>
<td>Ease of access and movement, child friendly facilities and activities, different levels of service to meet diverse age needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat Social Visitors</td>
<td>Repeat visitors, meeting up with others at the museum. Use the museum as a sociable space and want to feel a sense of ownership in their surroundings</td>
<td>Ease of access, comfort, orientation, good facilities, warm welcome, accessible exhibitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>Specialists wanting to deepen their knowledge further by engaging deeply with the collection</td>
<td>High quality access to collections, critical engagement, access to expert staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Lovers</td>
<td>Spiritually and emotionally motivated visitors who want to commune with objects in the collection, and use their existing knowledge as a base to go deeper</td>
<td>Ambience, deep sensory engagement, space for contemplation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{3}\) Please note that families are defined as an independent adult visitor visiting with a child aged under 16
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The diagram below compares the proportion of visitors that fell into each segment across the Great Rulers series, *Fra Angelico to Leonardo: Italian Renaissance Drawings* and the Museum overall.

**Visitor segments**

The two most prominent segments within the *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book the Dead* audience were Self-developers and Art Lovers, representing almost three quarters (72%) of the audience. This has been the case at all comparable previous special exhibitions and is a contrast to the Museum overall during the period of the exhibition, where only just over half were Self-developers (33%) or Art Lovers (20%).

The self-developer segment at *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book the Dead* was slightly larger than that at previous comparable exhibitions, with the exception of *Hadrian: Empire & Conflict*. The opposite case is found with the Art Lovers segment, a slightly lower proportion of this segment was in attendance compared to other exhibitions, with the exception of *Hadrian: Empire & Conflict*.

A relatively large proportion of Repeat Social Visitors were in attendance (12%) when compared to previous Reading Room exhibitions where this segment made up between 3% and 6% of the audience, again with the exception of *Hadrian: Empire & Conflict* (16%).
The same proportion of families attended the exhibition as did the British Museum overall during the same time period. The proportion of family visitors attracted was generally slightly lower than previous comparable exhibitions, although exceeded the proportion that visited at *Hadrian: Empire & Conflict* and *Fra Angelico to Leonardo: Italian Renaissance Drawings*. 
6

Events and accompanying programme

33% of visitors were aware of related Book of the Dead events activities at the Museum. Awareness among families of the accompanying programme was higher than awareness among non-families (46% and 32%), revealing a strongly communicated family specific programme.

There appears to be a correlation between knowledge level and event awareness, with those with specialist knowledge of the subject being most likely to be aware of the events programme and those with little or no knowledge being least likely.

The table below shows the percentage of these visitors who were aware of the different aspects of the programme. It also shows which aspects visitors had used or intended to use in future.
**Events programme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Aware</th>
<th>Attended</th>
<th>Intend attend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery Talks</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late night openings Thursdays and Fridays</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Activities</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Season</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Days</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Days</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debates</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performances</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Museum Documentary</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst the small sample base for this data must be borne in mind when drawing conclusions, the results clearly show that the exhibition talks and lectures had a high profile with 69% and 68% respectively being aware of each. Uptake of these events was also relatively high at 31% and 36% respectively, and interest in engaging with these elements in the future was even higher at 45%. 59% of visitors were aware of the late night exhibition openings, and this was the most attended of all the events tested with 40% attending.

For one visitor the talks provided a much needed introduction to the exhibition, giving them the tools to fully understand the exhibition.

*I think the thing I enjoyed most was being able to go and to listen to the curator before we actually came in and went through it, it made sense of it all before we got in, that was brilliant* General visitor vox pop

Non-families had higher awareness of the accompanying programme than family visitors with the exception of family activities and family days. When looking at family visitors in isolation\(^4\) 65% were aware of family activities and 60% actually participated in these showing very high uptake overall. 60% of families were aware of the family days, however uptake for this was slightly lower, with 40% attending.

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\(^4\) Please note, caution must be taken with family data in relation to events due to small bases of 40 and 41 respondents.
65% of visitors aware of the programme had not participated in any way whilst 57% did not intend to at any point. 35% of visitors stated that they generally attend events and activities at the British Museum. For those who stated that they did not do this the most frequently cited reason was because they do not live locally (64%).

6.1 Family provision

As stated above, 60% of families who were aware of the overall events programme knew about the family days and 40% said they attended on a family day. It must be pointed out, however, that shifts were specifically scheduled to capture the two family days on 22nd December 2010 and 19th February 2011, so these results will be skewed by this scheduling and should be read in line with internal data the Museum will have for family visit levels on these two days.

Family days clearly attracted family groups to the Museum; the qualitative research suggests that many had visited especially because of this provision.

Yes I came especially [because it was a family day] Family visitor vox pop

It is the first time we have been to a family day so it is great to know and we will certainly do this again. The exhibition was fun Family visitor vox pop

We came with her auntie and she saw it advertised and we knew it was a family day yes Family visitor vox pop

I didn’t see it advertised on the website but ... if it is a family day it would be good if it had some big thing outside the entrance like a giant kid’s balloon or something you know floating above just advertising it to everybody Family visitor vox pop

65% of family respondents aware of the events programme knew about the wrap-around family activities, and uptake was high at 60%.

I came predominantly for my son, and I think there were a lot of things for children, it was good General visitor vox pop

[The sleepover] actually is a wonderful introduction to this as well. You know that first step of an introduction to The Book of the Dead and so in the morning we already knew what it was when we came here Family visitor vox pop
[My son] liked the making stuff. Maybe if they could like draw hieroglyphics or he learnt how to write his name in hieroglyphics and maybe if they had like a craft thing where you could sit down and learn about hieroglyphics and stuff like that Family visitor vox pop
Access provision

Awareness and uptake of access provision

In terms of access provision visitors were most likely to be aware of the large print guides, as reported by 14% of respondents. 11% were aware of the tactile drawings and braille guides, and 7% were aware of the visually impaired audio tour. Overall 1% of respondents reported using the large print guides.

Visually impaired visitors’ reactions to tactile event

A small evaluation of a tactile event took place on 4\(^{th}\) February as part of the exhibition’s overall evaluation. The tactile event involved handling specific artefacts and a curator giving a talk. Visually impaired events attenders were asked if they would like to take part in a discussion group immediately after the event and four attenders chose to do so.

Repeat attenders and finding out about events

The events that the Museum arranges for visually impaired visitors are very well received. The attenders in the discussion group had all been to events previously, and had a strong appetite for attending similar events in the future.

> I’ve been to quite a few of these events, and I always find them very stimulating... Tactile event attender

> I am thrilled... I’m amazed [The British Museum] seem to be booking a lot more ahead. Because I thought gradually Mr Osborne will remove the money from us Tactile event attender

In terms of finding out about events, attenders felt that access could be widened to others who would be interested in such events but not know about them. One of the primary ways of finding out about future events is through attending an initial event:

> If you have a little write up that you could put out to people ... I’ll get my volunteers to read it to Talking News CD, give people that don’t come to these places an idea of what goes on Tactile event attender

> I find that one of the benefits of meetings like this is one learns more through the grapevine [of] what’s going on than official sources Tactile event attender
Practicalities and arrangements

Generally attenders would prefer to go to a tactile event first, to give them the background, and then maybe go round the exhibition if they wanted to explore things further. Some would appreciate it if a tour of the exhibition space was included as part of the event, however others felt that this would be too much information to take in and that the event itself was enough:

*Learn about it first [through the talk], know what to expect, and then you’ve got more of an appreciation of [the] visual and mental experience* Tactile event attender

*I think when you’re going to do this sort of thing, you should have enough time to do it all* Tactile event attender

*Time goes on, and after a bit I realise I’m not holding it as well. Which is why I didn’t go to the exhibition, which I would really enjoy. If I go now, I’ll be on my legs ... I won’t learn as much* Tactile event attender

Respondents raised some issues with the practicalities of using braille and large-print guides. For users of the braille guides in particular, these were felt to be more practical to use before or after going around the exhibition space due to users needing to use two hands to read the braille, and the weight of the book. For the large print guide users it is also helpful if the pages are taut so that if they use a magnifier, the focus is consistent:

*They’re very heavy* Tactile event attender

*If I have a large print guide, I have to use it with a magnifier. When they are floppy the focus changes* Tactile event attender

*It’s not easy to do Braille when you’re walking round ... you’ve got to use two hands* Tactile event attender

Attenders agreed that it would be useful if they were provided with take-home interpretation that they could use before or after the event:

*It would be nice to have the book at home* Tactile event attender

*Do you have CDs that [you] could send out? To let us have an audio version? And we could bring them back?* Tactile event attender

Improvements could be made to event arrangements if there was increased liaising between event organisers and transport providers, with clear details on where to drop off and pick up attenders. Whilst British Museum staff overall were praised by attenders for their helpfulness, some described occasions where staff members were unaware of a visually impaired event taking place, and that increased staff briefing could be helpful.
Conjuring the hereafter: an evaluation of *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* at the British Museum

When we came ... the Dial-a-Ride landed us at the back entrance ... eventually someone came, and he walked us through the galleries, took us down in the lift to the information desk and left us there. And I said we've come here for the Touch Tour, of the Egyptians ... and [the staff] didn't know, and had to enquire Tactile event attender

It’s happened to me before, that they didn’t actually know where the meeting point was for the group of visually impaired people Tactile event attender

Motivations and outcomes

Attenders arrived with a range of expectations, with an emphasis on intellectual motivations:

*It’s when you retire ... I think you should get out and follow your interests ... you have to keep doing things ... keeps you younger* Tactile event attender

*To learn things I didn’t know before* Tactile event attender

*What I expect to get out of it; knowledge and fun!* Tactile event attender

*It gives your brain a kick ... it helps keep you alive and thinking* Tactile event attender

In terms of actual outcomes delivered, the event provided a broad range of experiences, from social and intellectual outcomes through to deeper emotional and spiritual ones:

*We do meet people, like Mary here today, that I haven’t met for a long time* Tactile event attender

*Today it’s taught me so much about ancient Egypt. Got rid of some of the myths ... Even on television programmes ... there have been some cases of misinformation, and today I was able to get a lot of them sorted out* Tactile event attender

*It was really inspiring today ... I thought it was excellent* Tactile event attender

The combination of actually being able to handle genuine artefacts and gain access to expertise through the curator makes the event unique and brings the subject to life for attenders:

*The thing that was nice about today was the objects that we were able to touch ... I felt as if I lived in Ancient Egypt* Tactile event attender
Attenders particularly appreciated the curator’s skill at communicating the topic and the passion with which he spoke about it – this was key to their engagement:

The way he explained hieroglyphs was terrific because I’ve never actually looked at hieroglyphs before. Quite fantastic Tactile event attender

While you’re sitting here, you’ve got the opportunity to ask a question on something you’re wondering about Tactile event attender

What I did appreciate was the fact, the way John’s [the curator] put [the subject] into present day words what happened 3,000 years ago Tactile event attender
Motivations for visiting

8.1 Hierarchy of motivation

We have identified four key drivers for visiting museums:

Visitors who:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>See museum as a...</th>
<th>Have this driver...</th>
<th>And they seek this from a visit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHURCH</td>
<td>SPIRITUAL</td>
<td>Creative stimulation and quiet contemplation, they see museums as an opportunity to escape and recharge their batteries, food for the soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>EMOTIONAL</td>
<td>May have a personal connection to the subject matter, want to see fascinating objects in an inspiring setting, seek ambience, deep sensory and intellectual experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHIVE</td>
<td>INTELLECTUAL</td>
<td>Keen to encourage their children’s or their own interest and knowledge, may have professional interest in the subject, seek a journey of discovery, to find out new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTRACTION</td>
<td>SOCIAL</td>
<td>See museums as an enjoyable place to spend time with friends and family, seek ease of access and orientation, good facilities and services, welcoming staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At each level of the hierarchy visitors have different needs. The suggestion is not that visitors are forced or even led up this hierarchy, but that they get the opportunity to engage at the deepest level they wish to.

8.2 Main motivation

Using a series of statements on the exit survey we asked visitors to Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead to identify the main motivation for their visit to the British Museum that day. The diagram below shows the main motivation of visitors to Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead compared to comparable exhibitions.
Main motivation

- Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead
  - Spiritual 5%
  - Emotional 27%
  - Intellectual 52%
  - Social 16%

- Fra Angelico to Leonardo: Italian Renaissance Drawings
  - Spiritual 8%
  - Emotional 36%
  - Intellectual 46%
  - Social 10%

- Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler
  - Spiritual 2%
  - Emotional 38%
  - Intellectual 51%
  - Social 9%

- Shah 'Abbas: the Remaking of Iran
  - Spiritual 1%
  - Emotional 42%
  - Intellectual 51%
  - Social 4%

- Hadrian: Empire & Conflict
  - Spiritual 1%
  - Emotional 19%
  - Intellectual 59%
  - Social 21%

- The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army
  - Spiritual 3%
  - Emotional 47%
  - Intellectual 41%
  - Social 9%
We can see from the graph above that with the exception of *The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army*, visitors to major temporary exhibitions are consistently most likely to be mainly intellectually motivated.

In terms of how main motivations break down there appears to be a relatively consistent pattern emerging amongst visitors’ main motivation for visiting exhibitions in the Reading Room, the only exhibition to fall outside of this pattern is *Hadrian: Empire & Conflict*. With the exception of this latter exhibition, visitors to *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* were more likely to be mainly socially driven than previously, slightly more likely to be intellectually motivated, less likely to be emotionally driven, and with the exception of *Fra Angelico to Leonardo: Italian Renaissance Drawings* more likely to be mainly spiritually driven.

**How did exhibition attenders compare to the Museum overall?**

As can be seen through the graph to the left, visitors to *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* were significantly more likely to be mainly intellectually or mainly emotionally driven than visitors the British Museum overall during the time period of the exhibition.

Visitors clearly arrived at the exhibition highly motivated, with a view of what they were hoping to get out of their experience.
Differences between family and non-family visitors

The graph to the left highlights how group composition affects main motivation; family visitors are more than 50% more likely to be mainly intellectually driven, and significantly less likely than adult-only groups to be either mainly spiritually, emotionally or socially driven.
Specific motivations

In addition to identifying visitors’ main motivation for visiting the exhibition, we were also able to look at the proportion of visitors driven by specific motivators. Visitors were asked to choose all the reasons that motivated their visit – therefore, for example, visitors can be motivated to gain a deeper insight, but also to visit the shop or restaurant on the same visit.

### Specific motivators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% of visitors overall</th>
<th>Family visitors</th>
<th>Non-family visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>To stimulate my own creativity</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To reflect and contemplate</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To escape or recharge my batteries</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>To gain a deeper insight into the subject</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To experience awe-inspiring, fascinating or beautiful things or places</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be moved emotionally</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To feel a strong sense of personal connection</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To travel back in time</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>To improve my own knowledge and understanding</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a personal / academic / professional interest in the subject</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To encourage children’s interest in history</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>To visit one of the major attractions in the region</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To spend time with other people in a nice place</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To use facilities such as shop / café / toilet / restaurant</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall the two most selected options were to ‘improve my own knowledge and understanding’, and ‘I have a personal / academic / professional interest in the subject’. Family visitors were significantly more likely to prioritise their children’s learning over improving their own knowledge and understanding or satisfying their interests in the topic. Non-family visitors were significantly more likely than family visitors to be mainly seeking deeper insight, and the more social motivation of seeing a major attraction in the area.
Meaning making

Through our qualitative work into how visitors select and engage with objects in the museum environment, we have identified four modes of visitor behaviour. These modes classify how the visitor selects objects to explore and what kind of interpretation they need to make meaning from objects.

Hierarchy of Meaning making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Object selection</th>
<th>Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCHER</td>
<td>Specific objects/</td>
<td>Focused, specialist museum visitors, select objects themselves based on their in-depth knowledge of the subject area, want access to expert information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>collections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEARCHER</td>
<td>Classification/</td>
<td>Have good general understanding of the topic, consume all the information available in the museum on that subject, want museum to select and present objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOLLOWER</td>
<td>Narrative theme</td>
<td>Require a narrative explanation, want the museum to select and present objects which illustrate themes to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROWSER</td>
<td>Random objects</td>
<td>Select objects by browsing the exhibition, will wander until they find a ‘gateway’ object that catches their attention, require explanation of their selected objects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four modes form a hierarchy, with each level of the hierarchy representing an increased level of engagement with objects. It is possible for visitors to move upwards through the modes of behaviour – the modes can be seen as stages in the development of a visitor’s meaning making skills.

Visitors who are continually browsing an exhibition can only be making fleeting connections with a limited number of objects. If the Museum is committed to developing visitors’ levels of engagement it should seek to encourage visitors to develop their meaning making skills by selecting objects and offering interpretation that propels visitors up the hierarchy and engages them pro-actively.

Visitors were asked a question on the exit survey to identify their ‘entry mode’: how they behaved on entry to the exhibition. The results are shown below alongside those for previous major temporary exhibitions.
**Entry meaning making mode**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Searching (%)</th>
<th>Researching (%)</th>
<th>Following (%)</th>
<th>Browsing (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian Renaissance Drawings</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shah Abbas: The Remaking of Iran</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadrian: Empire &amp; Conflict</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visitors to *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* were most likely to enter in ‘searching’ mode – with a good general understanding of the topic and appetite for higher levels of information – a consistent finding across the comparator major exhibitions and reinforcing the idea of a highly motivated and dedicated temporary exhibitions audience.
The visit experience

9.1 Pre-show

Booking process and ticket collection

Visitors were satisfied with the booking process, with 62% saying it neither enhanced nor detracted form their experience. 34% of visitors thought the booking process ‘slightly’ or ‘strongly’ enhanced their overall experience and only 4% thought it ‘slightly’ or ‘strongly’ detracted from their experience.

The booking process compares reasonably well to previous exhibitions, it achieved more positive ratings compared to both Shah ‘Abbas: The remaking or Iran (29%) and Hadrian: Empire and Conflict (27%) however was rated less favourably than Fra Angelico to Leonardo: Italian Renaissance Drawings (41% positive ratings) and Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler (37%).

Similarly the ticket collection process was not problematic for visitors, with 54% saying it neither enhanced nor detracted from their visit experience. For 44% this process enhanced their visit and only 2% thought this had detracted from their overall visit.

Queuing

81% of visitors did not queue to enter the exhibition, and the overall mean queuing time was 2 minutes 6 seconds. For 39% of visitors the queuing space added to their overall experience of the exhibition and only 6% thought this element had detracted from their visit.
9.2 Observations

Visitors were observed in the following 7 sections of the exhibition, identified in the map below:

1. Nebseny audio visual (AV) and object in Day of Burial (50 individuals observed)
2. 3D Tomb and AV in Mummy in the Tomb (50 individuals observed)
3. Transformation in Empowering the Dead (50 individuals observed)
4. Scorpions and Scarabs in Avoiding Disaster (52 individuals observed)
5. Judgement in Judgement (50 individuals observed)
6. Hunefer in Making the Book of the Dead (50 individuals observed)
7. Family Trail in Avoiding Disaster (51 individuals observed)
The following information was recorded within each section:

- Dwell time in the area
- Whether visitors stopped and engaged with the AV and / or object
- Dwell time with the AV and / or object

Engagement with the Family trail was also measured and whether the resource was used as designed or not.

### 9.3 Attracting power

**Attracting power of AVs**

![Graph showing attracting power of AVs](image)

The most successful AV in terms of attracting power was the 3D Tomb with all observed visitors spending time at this AV, closely followed by Nebseny with 92% engaging. The Scorpions and Scarabs AV was the least visited – with 29% of visitors observed being attracted to this. The average attracting power of the AVs observed was 65%.
For AVs with accompanying objects we can see the objects were less attractive than the AVs themselves, a consistently smaller proportion of visitors engaged with the accompanying objects. This is most notably the case with the 3D Tomb where 100% of those observed were attracted to the AV and only 56% were attracted to the accompanying object. Nevertheless the average attracting power of the three objects observed was 67%.

The 3D Tomb was specifically mentioned by some visitors as an AV that stuck in their mind and added to their understanding and experience of the exhibition.

*Yes I watched some of the videos. Particularly one I remember, it's a depiction of Peter Pirus scene inside a Tomb and then it's a 3D reconstruction – that one certainly stuck out yeah* General visitor vox pop

*The one that builds the tomb into 3D works really well and it is really clever* General visitor vox pop
9.4 Dwell time

The average dwell time for visitors was 116 minutes, exceeding all other comparable Reading Room exhibitions where dwell time ranged from 75 minutes to 100 minutes. This data is supported by the comments in the vox pops; visitors felt there was a lot to cover but for some the exhibition design facilitated their exploration and drive to continue.

There was [a] lot of information to take in as well... I think as a normal person it’s hard to take all of that in. In one trip especially with everyone being ushered through... I think on my second time round I gained a lot more knowledge Independent adult visitor

I think it’s quite in depth, there’s lots to see – that’s why I’m so tired General visitor vox pop

I mean I’ve been to other ones at the British Museum before and the quality is always really high but there’s always a lot of information to absorb. I think sometimes I get really tired in exhibitions, I mean I’ve been here several hours, but, because you come into this big space at the end, but you’ve been through all the broken spaces beforehand that ... makes it easier and I haven’t got tired yet, so it’s better General visitor vox pop

Families spent less time in the exhibition (92 minutes on average) compared to non-families (117 minutes). From the qualitative research it was clear some families struggled to get through the content and keep their children engaged. The Museum could provide more guidance on age provision to avoid this in the future.

It’s a bit long for him but we always knew we were going to be tag teaming to get round the event Family visitor vox pop, 4 year old child

I mean my cousin and I came first and I really wanted to stop and read this and I just thought there is not enough to keep my 6 year old and my 8 year old engaged in here Family visitor

I felt for children particularly ... the publicity needs to be very clear about what age in fact to be fair to people Family visitor

We actually left our 11 year old behind and so it was just me and the two older boys and it was one of the first times I have been to something like this that is so sort of text heavy that I could actually concentrate and read it without wondering where the children were and whether they were enjoying it and actually because I was getting what I wanted out of it Family visitor
Basically we took a 5 ½ year old in and... she got bored a third of the way round. The provision for the kids wasn’t good enough essentially. The thing is it was great and we walked in and this woman helped us, really helpful and talked us all through it and she was really lovely and he was really excited by it and then you do the first spell and by the time you are half way round ... [The spells] became all that he really wanted to see by that point so a lot of my time was spent kind of distracting him so that my wife could actually look around Family visitor.

Dwell time with AVs

- Nebseny: 57s
- 3D Tomb: 68s
- Transformation: 17s
- Scorpions and Scarabs: 3s
- Judgement: 8s
- Hunefer: 58s

Dwell time with the 6 AVs observed ranged from 3 seconds (Scorpions and Scarabs) to 68 seconds (3D Tomb). Average dwell time with the AVs was 35 seconds. The AVs with the greatest attracting power also had the longest dwell time on average.
Dwell time with accompanying objects was similar to the AVs themselves. The exception here is the Hunefer object, where dwell time with the object was on average 48 seconds longer than that with the AV.
Average dwell time for the rooms observed was 305 seconds, average dwell times ranged from 80 seconds to 527 seconds. The longest dwell times observed were for the 3D Tomb (Mummy in the Tomb) and Hunefer (Making of the Book of the Dead) areas, both at over 500 seconds. Judgement also had an above average dwell time of just over 360 seconds, something that goes against the observed dwell time with the AV in this area, of only 8 seconds.
Family Trail

51 observations of the family trail were conducted in Avoiding Disaster. 47% (or 24 individuals) used the family trail in this area. The trail added an unanticipated element of interactivity to family visits.

*Well we liked collecting the bits with the children, the family trail bit* – Family visitor vox pop

*It was a lot more interactive than I thought it would be* – Family visitor vox pop

*[What I liked best about the Family Trail was] that it involved us doing things with him, because at the age of 6 he cannot read everything yet, and so for him to find the clues and things meant that we all had to be involved.*

*That was good* – General visitor vox pop

Despite this only 4 individuals of the 24 observed using the Family Trail used it as it was designed to be used. More could be done to explain the Trail to families before their visit, perhaps even giving instructions out at the ticket desk. Furthermore some visitors reported that the trails were not working properly - it is not clear whether this was the case or that visitors were just unsure of how to use the trails.

*The family trail] was explained by a lady at the start and my kids loved that but I didn’t get a chance to read any of that* Family visitor

*That you are a family and so it seems quite logical to get the guide [when you get your tickets]* Family visitor

*She was very interested in the whole punch things which sometimes worked and sometimes didn’t. The information on the boards looked more like directional instructions rather than an actual question. So we were looking for the question and didn’t see it straight away and so one of the curators around showed us and explained and said yeah obviously it is a question* Family visitor vox pop

*The lady that handed us it was lovely and she spoke, talked us through it and didn’t talk down to [my daughter] and was wonderful but by then it is too late because all they are going to get out of it is jamming that in all the machines [visitor felt her daughter was too young to appreciate the exhibition]* Family visitor
For others the Trail was too advanced for their children, or was simply not engaging for them.

I looked at the questions and I felt that they were a bit too old for him [4 years old]. I imagine that this sort of thing is more aimed at school children 7, 8 and 9 year olds Family visitor vox pop

The 6 and 7 year olds they were sort of running backwards and forwards trying to find their mums and half the time they were using those things and they didn’t always work and there was a lot of empty walls where you could have put more child friendly stuff Family visitor

9.6 Size of the exhibition space

The majority of visitors were surprised at the size of the exhibition, with 52% saying it was larger than they expected. Only 4% thought the exhibition was smaller than their expectations. Interestingly, non-families were more likely to say the exhibition was larger than expected (53%) than families (34%).

I didn’t expect it to be this big, for it to be this big and for so many of the pages to be intact considering they are thousands of years old, you would think that more of them would be unreadable, but no, it is incredible General visitor vox pop

9.7 The presence of children in the exhibition

In the formative evaluation some adult potential visitors expressed a worry in terms of children and school groups having a negative impact on their experience.

For some this was a problem with visitors using the Family Trails in an already crowded area of the exhibition.

In some sections there were the interactive things for the kids feeding through the walls and it was right near the entrance to another section so it was just you having to fight through children which [wasn’t] really that fun Independent adult visitor

However, the majority of visitors did not express this as an issue, one even mentioning how it was a pleasure to see young people engaging with the exhibition.
Conjuring the hereafter: an evaluation of Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead at the British Museum

Maybe it was just me and yes there were a lot of children but I really didn’t mind them as much as I minded the people just standing in front of the things for ages Independent adult visitor

I’ve also been looking at people, much younger people are standing and looking at things for a long time, not just walking past, it’s riveting General visitor vox pop
9.8 Visitors' reactions room by room

The following pages summarise the results of the visit experience – mainly using qualitative data from the discussion groups. Participants were asked to comment on each section in turn.

- "Crowding around the mummy" - Independent adult visitor
- "The beginning of the exhibition seemed a bit muddled and cramped. Perhaps a good introducing room here and a film of the journey you are about to take" - Family visitor
- "At the start it was pretty confusing as to what the book of the dead was... A bit more context about what we were going to see through-out the exhibition from the start... it’s a bit confusing" - General visitor Vox pop
- "Interested to find out what’s in the rooms. More space needed for people to start" - Independent adult visitor
- "[The introductory film] gave me a start on what the rest of it was going to be about" - Family visitor
- "Busy - didn’t really know where to go" - Independent adult visitor
- "Liked being able to see all the different ways it is written out, on a coffin etc" - Independent adult visitor
- "I think there should have been something clearer about ‘spells’, the explanation was a bit indirect for something so important, especially as they are not the usual meaning as in a witch’s spell" - Family visitor
Conjuring the hereafter: an evaluation of *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* at the British Museum

6. Empowering the Dead

'Lighter, can breath. Little birds and animals, spirits of the dead?' - Family visitor

'English translations of texts quite poetic' - Independent adult visitor

5. Landscape of the Hereafter

'Such an exquisite centerpiece, should maybe be a stand alone' - Independent adult visitor

'Liked the use of light, extra design, beetles projected' - Independent adult visitor

4. Mummy in the Tomb

'Loved the presentation linking the text with the papyrus, multimedia usage great' - Independent adult visitor

'Brought things together, dark mood, good room' - Family visitor

7. Avoiding Disaster

03/05/2012

MORRIS HARGREAVES McINTYRE
9. Perfect Afterlife

‘The descriptions of the fields of reeds were good and not too hard to follow’ - Family visitor

8. Judgement

‘Weighing of the heart, referred to earlier but more detailed later’ - Family visitor

10. Making the Book of The Dead

‘I think maybe it needed something to tie it all together at the end. It stopped quite suddenly actually’ - Independent adult visitor

11. Nesitanebisheru’s Book of The Dead

In the whole 37 metres there were three or four little chunks of information and I thought it would be more interesting if you had... a little explanation about each individual page or maybe something interesting to say about the whole thing - Independent adult visitor

‘Very interesting visual, good to see how things are made’ - Family visitor

‘Just interesting to see a 'whole one' - Family visitor

‘I felt it was a kind of release from the whole sections before from the Book of the Dead’ - Independent adult visitor

‘Very interesting to me how all the sections come together’ - Independent adult visitor
Layout & display

This chapter details visitors’ reactions to the exhibition design in terms of ambience and atmosphere created, layout of the space and display of objects.

10.1 Exhibition design

78% thought the ambience of the exhibition space enhanced their visit, for 10% this aspect detracted from their visit.

To what extent did the ambience of the exhibition space (lights, colours etc) enhance or detract from your overall visit experience?

- 47% Strongly enhanced
- 31% Slightly enhanced
- 12% Neither
- 9% Slightly detracted
- 2% Strongly detracted

Through lighting techniques and sound the exhibition’s ambience clearly helped conjure the idea of death, offering visitors an immersive experience.

*I found it quite creepy actually* Independent adult visitor

*The whole atmosphere does make it feel about death, I guess that is it the music, the atmosphere and the light, yes, it does definitely give you that sense* General visitor vox pop

*I love the atmosphere, the vibe. I entered at first and it feels like a funeral home. A very respectful vibe... Very peaceful, I love the way it is curated* General visitor vox pop

*As the exhibition is about book of the dead, it feels a bit eerie... it really added to the experience* General visitor vox pop

*Where it’s more closed up it’s almost got a sacred atmosphere to it, I was amazed* Family visitor vox pop

The lighting in particular was mentioned by some as a positive element of the exhibition design.

*It’s very subdued, it’s very beautiful the colours the lights, it’s very studious it’s... very good, very ambient* General visitor vox pop
I think it's really good the way they've done it, there's just enough light so that you can see the writing it's good General visitor vox pop

However for a few visitors, low lighting coupled with over-crowding detracted from their visit experience.

Poor actually because you’re trying to read an item written up at the side, if people were in front of the light then a shadow fell across it and you couldn’t read the information, so you had to then wait until someone moved, once again a bottle neck General visitor vox pop

As with the lighting, many visitors commented positively about the sounds in the exhibition.

I like the voices that you can hear like little children laughing as it makes you feel like you are really actually there and not just walking around an exhibition Family visitor vox pop

But for some the background noises were a distraction.

I am getting quite annoyed with the music... It's a sound affect and once you notice it, you can’t stop noticing it General visitor vox pop

There was some disagreement around the design in terms of facilitating the feeling of being in a tomb. Some wanted this to be made more obvious whereas others were satisfied with the design and thought going further with this idea would detract from their experience.

I mean I think if there had been some, about the actual tombs themselves, maybe some sort of I don’t know mock up of a tomb that would have been quite enjoyable General visitor vox pop

I think maybe the backdrop could have been... made a bit more effective and you actually felt like you were a bit more in a tomb rather than just an exhibit Independent adult visitor

I really liked the presentation and personally I wouldn’t have liked the whole making it feel more like a tomb because this was almost a blank page for us to project our interpretation on the art Independent adult visitor
10.2 Layout and flow of the exhibition space

69% of visitors thought the layout / flow of the exhibition enhanced their experience, with 14% saying it detracted.

To what extent did the layout / flow of the exhibition enhance or detract from your overall visit experience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Strongly enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>Slightly enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Slightly detracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Strongly detracted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exhibition design allowed visitors to get close to certain objects, something a few mentioned as a privilege.

[The lasting impression for me is] the actual exhibits and how close you were to them and how good you could actually see. I mean yes the space was problematic but at the end of the day when you stood in front of one of those papyrus you could really see the individual strokes of the pen or pencil and you could really see how incredibly detailed the papyrus were... How old and fragile and I really liked that because at other museums as well where it is... relatively far away Independent adult visitor

[What I enjoyed most was] just seeing everything there in front of you and the fact that you can get that close to everything... I have been to see the Terracotta warriors here and just the fact that you can get so close them was the same with this and I wanted to be able to get up close to all the manuscripts and the actual artefacts General visitor vox pop

The exhibition was divided into sections, with each section representing a different stage in the Book of the Dead. Many visitors got a sense of a journey when going through the exhibition; the design facilitated this in terms of subtle changes in lighting and sound. This ‘sectioning’ of the content facilitated visitors’ understanding of the themes covered.

I thought the layout was very clever, in the way that you go through ... the pattern of death in the layout I thought that was quite clever General visitor vox pop

Well it clearly worked because as I say without even realising you are kind of taken through the whole Book of the Dead in bits but you focus on each section as you do it General visitor vox pop
My first thoughts, and again when you first go in and you go round that
long dark bit I kind of thought 'oh we are dead, we are dying we are going
to the afterlife'. But that kind of then stopped because you are suddenly in
this really dark cramped room. But I must say I did this time because there
was a bit more space it did feel like as you went through rooms started
opening up a bit and you kind of felt 'oh I have kind of now got on to a next
stage and it's lighter... I must be going into the afterlife or something' Family
visitor

It went through the stages of the book of the dead, I thought that it made
sense, I thought it was a clear way of explaining something quite
complicated General visitor vox pop

You almost go into a different room in each section as well which I thought
was a good idea, it's a lot easier to walk around that way and learn each
section as you go Family visitor vox pop

A few visitors thought this was a natural progression and something they
didn’t consciously acknowledge; instead they felt this was their journey, not a
prescribed route to follow.

*What I find in an exhibition like this is it’s not; you don’t have to follow this
chronologically or anything... you don’t have a certain route to take, you can
do it whichever order you want... I think it is very self-explanatory*

Independent adult visitor

*Yeah I kept coming up with questions in my head and then I'd go to the next
bit and then there were answers and then I'd have another question so I did
get that feeling [of a journey]* Independent adult visitor

The final room in the exhibition containing the 37-metre Nesitanebisher’s
Book of the Dead was an apt finale for many, bringing together everything
they had learnt in a bright, open space.

*I really liked how it all came together in the last room and you could spot,
well a kind of amateur like me could kind of see what was going on. I really
liked that!* Independent adult visitor

*Yes it was very open and you definitely realised 'oh this is the end'*

Independent adult visitor
However for others, the final room was lacking in explanation and was a somewhat abrupt end to the exhibition.

**It kind of tailed off for me. It just kind of went and here is the end. The last page of papyrus didn’t even have a description on and there is nothing to kind of say this is the end and it didn’t really touch on anything** Family visitor

### 10.3 Issues of crowding

Crowding in the exhibition was mentioned by many visitors in the qualitative research, in the quantitative survey the volume of visitors in the room detracted from 31% of visits. This threatened the experience of a journey and was a problem for both non-family and family visitors.

*The writing was really small and people were getting so close to read it and I stood there and thought ‘for god’s sake will you move’* Independent adult visitor

*After going through half of that and the amount of people and the moving and shoving around and trying to look under someone’s armpit to see the writing... you just felt like ‘I have had enough’. Half way through I just said ‘you know what, forget the money we paid for it, let’s just go’* Independent adult visitor

*Even if you are in the position to look at things you are aware of the pressure of people behind you* General visitor vox pop

*We didn’t get very far because it was so crowded. I mean [my daughter] is only about that high and she just could not see anything at all* Family visitor

*The first time I came at half term week as well and it was just mad... I didn’t have this feeling of moving to another room I just wanted to get somewhere where it was quieter* Family visitor

Crowding was particularly a problem at the start of the exhibition and those using multi-media guides were also mentioned as antagonising the issue by non-guide users.

*The space got a lot easier to navigate as you went along and at the end they were quite spacious rooms but at the beginning the first few rooms... that is where people tend to congregate and so it was crowded* Independent adult visitor
Conjuring the hereafter: an evaluation of Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead at the British Museum

The main text... right by a door entrance [within each section] and that is where people stood so you couldn’t get in... because it was the biggest and most important piece of information was there Independent adult visitor

The first few rooms you feel so harried that it is quite; I didn’t really enjoy those first few rooms at all Family visitor

It is too congested at the beginning I think. Especially those with the ear pieces they hog the whole lot Family visitor vox pop

Despite the above reported problems, for 35% of visitors stated the volume of visitors in the room didn’t detract from their visit.

When I came it was quiet and it was brilliant and I had plenty of time to walk around Independent adult visitor

Right from the start it wasn’t over crowded, that was nice actually because in some places it is dreadful. It was nice to have it on for a long time so that you had a good chance at looking at it Family visitor vox pop
11 Content

11.1 Amount and quality of information

95% of visitors were satisfied with the amount and quality of information available, with 65% saying they were ‘very’ satisfied with this. Only 2% were dissatisfied with the amount of information in the exhibition.

Visitors felt that the level of information was well balanced with artefacts and visual projections, and that this balance allowed them space to interpret independently.

It’s just sort of packed full of really beautiful pieces and there isn’t too much information on the walls which I really like, it’s the history itself that’s speaking rather than the museum General visitor vox pop

I liked the explanations of the texts and how it was structured and organised, the kind of projections, it’s really a fantastic one General visitor vox pop

However for others, as discussed above, there was too much to take in.

I found there was too much information, there was a lot to take in and sometimes you couldn’t get near some of the things because there were so many people, I thought it was quite interesting but yeah I didn’t feel like I learnt that much there was too much to take in General visitor vox pop

Family visitors were slightly less likely to have strong positive reactions to the amount of information available with 53% being ‘very’ satisfied compared to 65% of non-families. For many families the interpretation was too text-heavy for children.

I think there [was] too much reading and not enough things to do Family visitor vox pop
I would say my youngest son who is 8 struggled a little bit keeping the attention span and maybe he should have had the guide with hindsight
Family visitor vox pop

11.2 The tone of the information and language used

Visitors were extremely satisfied with the tone and language employed, with 96% satisfied with this element.

To what extent were you satisfied with the tone of the information and the language used?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>64%</th>
<th>32%</th>
<th>2%</th>
<th>1%</th>
<th>1%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Quite Satisfied</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Not very Satisfied</td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Families were slightly less satisfied with this aspect; 89% stated they were satisfied, compared to 97% on non-families.

11.3 Narrative and theme

59% of visitors were ‘very’ satisfied with the themes / storyline / narrative of the exhibition and 89% were satisfied overall.

To what extent were you satisfied with the themes / storyline / narrative of the exhibition?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>59%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>2%</th>
<th>0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Quite Satisfied</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Not very Satisfied</td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As discussed above, the exhibition design facilitated the experience of a journey among many visitors. Some visitors, however, would have appreciated more background and contextual information to the exhibition, specifically what they were going to experience, a more thorough introduction to what the Book of the Dead actually was, as well as more general detail including timelines, excavation, and the belief system.

I think that for people who do know about the history and go in there it is quite informative but for someone like me who just wants to know what it is about I think yeah it needs to ease you in a little bit more Independent adult visitor
It is not that you should focus it less on the Book of the Dead, because after all that is the exhibition, but maybe it would be you know advisable to have one or two rooms at the beginning that have nothing to do with the Book of the Dead but solely background information on what you are about to go into. Independent adult visitor

The main sort of contextualisation is generally with writing and the odd sarcophagus that could probably be broadened out a bit. I mean there are some funerary artefacts in there, but there’s not an awful lot of more general information about Egypt, timelines, where the stuff was found, if you don’t know that stuff already you’re not going to get it from coming here. General visitor vox pop

It would have been good to have an overall introduction at the beginning so that you knew which of the Gods was which and what you were looking at, in the whole thing because I think it was too detailed so you couldn’t assimilate all that detail. General visitor vox pop

The theme of conservation and preservation was also mentioned; this was touched on in the exhibition but some would have enjoyed more detail.

Maybe I would have put a bit more context, maybe given it a bit more contemporary relevance as well, I mean I really liked the bit about you know how studies are developing to understand the manuscripts and how to the strategy for preserving them for example I think that was really good, well done. Maybe a sort of mention of other cultures and other books, yeah parallels would have been nice, I don’t know if there are any that I haven’t seen. General visitor vox pop

In terms of the content it was covered slightly but not too much and it is not the whole point of the exhibition but I would like to see more about conservation and how they are preserved – Independent adult visitor

I was... interested in the ... display case about the conservation. I’d like a display case which you talk about the physical process of reassembling and it would have been nice to have some attention to the intellectual process of reassembling objects, which actually is not addressed in the exhibition General visitor vox pop

For a few visitors this extra conservation detail would include the background and origins of the objects and the installation of the exhibition itself.

Yeah it would be really good to see [the making of the exhibition] and I think people would give you a lot more support as well. Independent adult visitor
Conjuring the hereafter: an evaluation of Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead at the British Museum

It would add if they actually videoed it and it would be nice to see how they set this up and where they got the artefacts from Independent adult visitor

11.4 Films

Visitors were more satisfied with the AV content throughout the exhibition (69%) than the introductory film in isolation (55%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent were you satisfied with the Audio-visual content?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Awareness of the introductory film was low with 81% of visitors being unaware (this was slightly lower for family visitors at 28%). Greater awareness and usage of this element could have helped to alleviate the need of some visitors for more contextual information, as described above.

I completely missed it Independent adult visitor

It needed something and whether it was a film at the beginning, some context Family visitor

For those who did see the film, it added valuable context before they entered the exhibition.

We watched the beginning film, which I thought was good, that was useful. I think it was a good introduction General visitor vox pop

I think it set the tone for what we were about to see and I think it was a good introduction because it's a bit like reading the blurb on a book we knew what we were coming in here to look at whereas before we knew vaguely what the Book of the Dead was about but the film was a good easy intro to let you know what was coming Family visitor vox pop
Most visitors praised the AV content throughout the exhibition, they liked that it was a break from reading and many found it a user-friendly way to take in information.

I quite liked the idea of having some of the things higher ... rather than at the same level. Especially if you have one sort of artefact that is quite crowded you can look at something else and so maybe on different levels I quite liked that Independent adult visitor

[The films were good] good because they seemed to come at the right time, as you were reading the explanations on the cases, it came as a nice break, it is more interactive that way General visitor vox pop

They were quite a relief actually because when you realise that the short film bit was focusing on the papyri in one of the show cases you thought right, that’s where that is, you could take it in more easily General visitor vox pop

What I liked was in certain rooms you had a projector; there was one where the sun comes up and the scarabs scatter away Independent adult visitor

I liked the amount of information around and when the pictures on the walls moved and highlighted bits Family visitor vox pop

The film would pick out certain bits and highlight them, all the key bits and also the key stages along each journey. I thought that was good as when you are walking past, you don’t necessarily see the individual parts of the story unless it is picked out for you General visitor vox pop
11.5 Multimedia guide – adult and family

This was the second Reading Room exhibition to have used multimedia guides in place of audioguides. On this occasion both adult and family versions of the multimedia guides were available.

Usage of the guides lengthens visitor dwell time. The increase in dwell time is only minimal with users of the adult multimedia guides, but family guide users spend 31 minutes longer on their visit than the overall average.

Levels of awareness and usage of the multimedia guides is relatively similar to results for Fra Angelico to Leonardo: Italian Renaissance Drawings.

Visitors’ responses to the multimedia guides

The multimedia guides for many visitors who use them provide a tool for accessing the exhibition content more easily – it makes what for some is an overwhelming level of content digestible and helps them to uncover the star objects and most important themes.

I wouldn’t have really liked to have done the exhibition without it to be honest. I wouldn’t have enjoyed it as I have because I think there’s too much to take in Visitor vox pop

It’s enabled me to select because … there’s a huge amount of detail Visitor vox pop

The focus because there’s so much to see and to look at, and you can usually get overwhelmed and miss a lot of things, but this guide I find it you know, you really have a focus of what’s going on in the exhibit, and you can stray from it a little bit, but it always pulls you back and by the end of it you feel like you have a real understanding of the whole exhibition Visitor vox pop

At the same time the guides provide an extra layer of information for those visitors who crave the details, and this multi-layering can be tailored to suit different visitors’ needs and interests.

It’s nice to go to different levels of understanding … sometimes in the guides there are options to layer down further and deeper Visitor vox pop

You could go at your own pace and you could select something if you were interested or leave it if you weren’t Visitor vox pop
The inclusion of images and films within the guides were viewed as innovative and added an extra dimension to the experience:

- It just adds extra layers ... I’ve used it for when I go to National Trust properties, it’s the same sort of thing but this is quite an advanced one, normally it’s only audio I quite like the visual aspect, and where it points out ... the details Visitor vox pop

- I thought on the whole this is probably one of the most advanced models that I’ve used as one of these guides Visitor vox pop

- Videos on here, the interactivity of the screen and additional bit of someone talking to you ... I think it really enhances it Visitor vox pop

Gaining ‘direct’ access to experts and hearing their views and knowledge first hand was a highlight for many multimedia guide users:

- I liked the fact that the curators spoke and were given names, that sort of presentation, I liked that Visitor vox pop

- This is fantastic, it’s like having somebody very expert whispering in your ear. It’s like being taken around and that’s lovely Visitor vox pop

Overall 88% of visitors using the adult multimedia guides felt that they enhanced their visit (based on 37 respondents), and for users of the family multimedia guide this figure was 94% (based on 16 respondents).

A downside of the guides for some users was that they caused ‘bottle necks’ at certain areas within the exhibition.

- There were occasional displays that were made into a corner ... you had to wait for quite a long time for that corner to become available, rather than a smooth flow Visitor vox pop

However, others felt that the guides actually alleviated the problem of overcrowding for them as it allowed them to step out of the main visitor flow and absorb information before going to look at objects in detail:

- You can stand in the background and listen to it rather than having to get close up Visitor vox pop

- Because this papyrus are so small, it was better for me to stand to one side ... and listen to it on screen and look at it on screen and then go and have a look at the artefact .... I got more out of it Visitor vox pop
Generally the guides were found to be relatively easy to operate; just under three-quarters (74%) of adult multimedia guide users rated them as easy to use, and all 16 respondents who had used the family multimedia guide did so. There were, however, occasional problems in navigating the information due to the numbering. Some visitors were confused as to the ordering of the numbers and some found them difficult to locate within the exhibition space:

*Some of them they were not corresponding with the numbers, so I was a little bit confused ... there was number 55 ... there was no light so you couldn’t see* Visitor vox pop

*We had a bit of difficulty to begin with, because we didn’t realise that the showcase numbers weren’t the same as the numbers on here* Visitor vox pop

*It seems to go from ... number 2 to number 3 with quite a large gap in the middle* Visitor vox pop

Thus an improvement for visitors would be more initial orientation information outlining how many artefacts are contained on the guides and where the artefacts are located:

*... a map [on the guide], so that we can look at it and it shows where we are* Visitor vox pop

*In the guide I think when it starts if there was a voiceover that said “there’s going to be 20 of these, there’s one in each room”, so you could pace yourself* Visitor vox pop

**Why did some visitors not use the multimedia guides?**

Some visitors resented that the guides were charged at an additional cost and not inclusive within the ticket price.

Some visitors do not want the extra detail presented in the multimedia guides, but were seeking instead a broader overview or felt that there would be enough information already, and thus chose not to use them.

*I’ve been around special exhibitions here before and I’ve found that the information they have written up is fine* Visitor vox pop
Others naturally prefer to interpret and navigate the space independently, and would find the guides too restrictive:

_I have ideas in my own mind and I like to sort them out myself ... I would rather have the experience of seeing it and walking through it than having the walker thing [multimedia guide]_ Visitor vox pop

_You can sometimes get bogged down with the guide, it’ll go into vast quantities of detail which you don’t want and you’re stuck with it, so I prefer to make my own way round_ Visitor vox pop

Whilst others felt that in a group situation, using the guides may be considered anti-social:

_I’m with a group of friends, and we like to stop and talk. I think it makes it a bit of a ... lonely experience with those guides_ Visitor vox pop
Outcomes

12.1 Impact

The chart below compares visitors’ main motivation for visiting against the main outcome they got from the exhibition experience.

**Overall impact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main motivation</th>
<th>Main outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual 5%</td>
<td>Spiritual 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional 27%</td>
<td>Emotional 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual 52%</td>
<td>Intellectual 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social 16%</td>
<td>Social 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that there has been a small but relatively significant shift up the hierarchy, with a smaller proportion of visitors citing social and intellectual main outcomes as did main motivations. There has been a corresponding increase in the proportion of visitors achieving mainly emotional and spiritual outcomes, with the latter more than doubling in proportion from motivation to outcome.
Family visitors are much more intellectually motivated than non-family visitors, however there is little shift in terms of main outcomes achieved, with families achieving the outcomes expected from the exhibition. Non-family visitors however are pushed up the hierarchy towards more emotional and spiritual outcomes.

These findings indicate that families are largely accurately predicting what they will experience from the exhibition, and are getting what they came for, whilst non-family visitors seem more likely to have their expectations exceeded, experiencing unanticipated emotional and spiritual outcomes.
Conjuring the hereafter: an evaluation of *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* at the British Museum

Ranked impact on specific motivations

The table below shows results for each motivator statement, revealing the difference between the proportion of visitors who selected each statement as a reason for visiting, and the proportion of visitors who felt they experienced each statement as an outcome. By doing this analysis we can see how the exhibition met, or exceeded expectations.

We can see that not as many visitors felt that they gained improved knowledge and understanding or fulfilled their personal / academic / professional interest in the subject as were expecting to, and there was also a move away from the more social outcome of visiting one of the major attractions in the region. However the exhibition delivered a broad range of unanticipated emotional and spiritual outcomes – most noticeably encouraging visitors to reflect and contemplate.

Overall visitors were most likely to indicate that they gained deeper insight into the subject and improved their knowledge and understanding as outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All motivations</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Pre-visit</th>
<th>Post-visit</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>To stimulate my own creativity</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To reflect and contemplate</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To escape or recharge my batteries</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>+3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>To gain a deeper insight into the subject</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To experience awe-inspiring, fascinating or beautiful things or places</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be moved emotionally</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>+3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To feel a strong sense of personal connection</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To travel back in time</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>To improve my own knowledge and understanding</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a personal / academic / professional interest in the subject</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>-11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To encourage children’s interest in history</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>To visit one of the major attractions in the region</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To spend time with other people in a nice place</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To use facilities such as shop / café / toilet / restaurant</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conjuring the hereafter: an evaluation of *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* at the British Museum

**Progression**

The following model illustrates the journey for visitors in terms of their main motivation and main outcome achieved.

At the bottom of the hierarchy, the majority of those with mainly social motivations move upwards, experiencing intellectual (34%), emotional (31%) and even spiritual (17%) main outcomes. Those mainly intellectually motivated also achieve their expected outcomes, and over at third (34%) move up the hierarchy to emotional (26%) and spiritual outcomes (8%).

27% of visitors were emotionally motivated – 73% of these visitors achieved emotional motivations, however some experienced unexpected social (4%) and intellectual (22%) outcomes.

Finally of the 5% of visitors mainly spiritually motivated 77% achieved this as a main outcome, with the remaining 23% getting a mainly emotional experience from their visit.

These results reflect the unexpected emotional and spiritual connections visitors had to the *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* exhibition.
Impact on future behaviour

Visitors were asked whether visiting *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* would affect the way they used the British Museum in the future. The table below shows the proportion of exhibition visitors who said they would alter their behaviour. The first column also shows the actual number of visitors this translates to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More likely to...</th>
<th>% of exhibition visitors</th>
<th>% of family visitors</th>
<th>% of non-family visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visit the Ancient Egyptian Galleries</td>
<td>55% (88,124)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit British Museum special exhibitions</td>
<td>54% (86,522)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the British Museum website</td>
<td>50% (80,113)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See or find out more about Book of the Dead events and activities</td>
<td>42% (67,295)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit the British Museum in general</td>
<td>38% (60,886)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find out more about the British Museum</td>
<td>32% (51,272)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the British Museum’s online collection</td>
<td>24% (38,454)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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It is clear the *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* exhibition encouraged visitors to explore the rest of the Museum. This was particularly the case for family visitors, however non-families were more likely to say they would visit the Ancient Egyptian Galleries specifically.

*It is somewhere where I would love to come back again. The whole building is amazing and fantastic.* Family visitor

*When I normally come I sort of focus on the Greek and Roman parts of the Museum and the Elgin Marbles and so I will definitely spend a bit more time looking at the Egyptian Galleries.* Independent adult visitor

*I only come to the Museum to go to special exhibitions well I may well or will be tempted to go and actually look at the Egyptian artefacts in the rest of the Museum.* Independent adult visitor
Although for families when visiting the British Museum specifically they would generally treat it differently to a ‘normal’ museum visit – concentrating on specific galleries.

*I would treat it slightly different from the Horniman as well where I see everything and think just let’s go and look at this today* Family visitor

54% of visitors were also more likely to visit other special exhibitions as a result of their visit too, this was more the case for non-family visitors (54%) compared to family visitors (49%). The focus groups revealed that some families thought the general British Museum offer was more geared towards families than exhibitions.

*I think the whole offering around children and families is great in terms of everything else apart from exhibitions at the moment* Family visitor

*We went to the mummy section first and then we went to look at Chinese jades. I think in terms of exhibitions I think in future just a little bit more careful in assuming that something might be for children* Family visitor

The exhibition will also clearly have a lasting legacy in terms of encouraging new visitors to come back. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the new audience visiting *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* stated that they were more likely to visit future special exhibitions as a result of their visit, and just over half (51%) stated that they were more likely visit the Museum in general.
Meaning making impact

The chart below compares how visitors expected to behave in the exhibition alongside what they actually did during their visit.

Meaning making impact

As can be seen from the chart, there was only a relatively small shift in visitors’ intended behaviour and what they actually ended up doing. As the Museum’s reputation for exhibitions grows and the loyal base of repeat exhibition attenders continues to come back, visitors are increasingly knowledgeable of what to expect in terms of information levels within the exhibition, and are accurately anticipating the way in which they will absorb this information.

The most common exit mode during Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead was ‘Searching’ in which visitors immerse themselves in the exhibition - 47% of respondents stated that they followed this behaviour during the exhibition with 43% expecting to behave in this way.

For family visitors 60% fell into the ‘Following’ category – visitors require a narrative explanation and want the Museum to select objects to illustrate the themes to follow – compared to 45% who thought they would behave in this way. There was a corresponding decrease in the exit mode ‘Searching’ (26%
from 38%). This could be due to the fact that family visitors are more likely to be first-time visitors to the Museum, and as reflected in the qualitative research, some family visitors thought the exhibition was too long and detailed for their children, resulting in a less immersive visit. Nevertheless it is important to note that the majority of family visitors did get the intellectual outcomes they were motivated by from their visit.

12.2 Intellectual outcomes

Improved knowledge and understanding

45% of visitors achieved a mainly intellectual outcome from their visit, 29% were specifically related to improving their own knowledge and understanding. Many learnt about the culture and the gods explored in the exhibition and some comments reflected a previous unfamiliarity with the Book of the Dead specifically.

I learnt loads from the exhibition and most of my criticisms are mainly sort of aspects of crowding and nothing to do with the actual content of the exhibition at all Independent adult visitor

I think the most important thing was the fact that... the class system existed that many thousands of years ago... and how that really matters and it is still this way today Independent adult visitor

I learnt about Ra and one of the things that amused me a lot of the animals was like from Edward Lear drawings. But [my daughter] did buy herself a book of spells which she has been practising on her dolls Family visitor

I think [it’s] just fantastic to get more knowledge about it, because I knew a bit about it, but I didn’t know about the Book of the Dead General visitor vox pop

12.3 Emotional outcomes

Insight and awe-inspiring exhibits

39% of visitors achieved a mainly emotional outcome from their visit. Some mentioned the beauty of the collection and how privileged and in awe they were in getting to view it.

I guess an appreciation of the sheer amount of work that made in to these things and the beauty of the things General visitor vox pop
I have seen images after studying history of art that I have never seen like the head of a turtle... I have researched a lot into Egyptian culture and to see things that I have never seen before is amazing. 

[Personally I will take with me] the lovely images we got used to seeing in Egypt. Reiterated again and it's brought back how wonderful it is. We've looked on things that were made so many hundreds and thousands of years ago. Marvellous.

General visitor vox pop

Personal connections and emotional reactions

For other visitors there was a more personal reaction to the exhibition in terms of the Egyptian afterlife and their beliefs.

I am... interested in the esoteric side of it, it's kind of sentimental rather than, well it's spiritual in a way but it's more for the alive than for the dead, they did it to preserve the essence of it, I was just comparing contemporary and ancient.

General visitor vox pop

The... thing I have come away with is how complicated all of their traditions surrounding death were for them. How much went into the afterlife compared to what we would do with a simple burial. To have so much pride in what you take with you, I find it kind of extraordinary, it's part of lives.

General visitor vox pop

12.4 Spiritual outcomes

Reflection and contemplation

For some visitors there was a religious connection to the exhibition, they could draw parallels and contrast the Egyptian belief system to their own modern lives and religious beliefs. The themes of life after death were also questioned by a few visitors who experienced spiritual reflection from their visit.

For me, very much the rituals that go with death and life after death, and as a Catholic I've been quite amused at all the spells and sort of thinking of the similarities.

General visitor vox pop

There are universal themes that everyone can identify but yeah I mean it's, there's personal journey for the individual but you're also looking at the belief system of the individual of several ancient individuals and I think that's quite powerful.

General visitor vox pop

Afterlife is important, it makes you think, depending on your religion, what you believe in.

General visitor vox pop
I just thought the Egyptians Book of the Dead you ended with death and that was it. They were obsessed with death and dismiss it but in fact they were also interested in the afterlife and I was brought up a Catholic so it was quite interesting to see that they actually prayed to their... dead for intercessions which of course you know you are taught as a Catholic and all that kind of stuff so I was able to relate it to another cultural aspect and I found it very good Independent adult visitor

It’s just interesting how people view death and after life, it’s quite similar to Chinese actually, because I guess the emphasis is on trying to prepare for the afterlife and how they view after-life as a second life too General visitor vox pop

Others experienced deep contemplation about the themes explored, drawing similarities and contracts between ancient Egyptian civilizations and modern day society and culture.

I suppose I am completely rethinking civilisation, I would like to come back, it’s pretty earth shattering in terms of looking at equality of the image, the relationship between text and image, image based cultures, what’s the purpose of representation... I feel that I understand the culture that I live in a different way after having been to see this exhibition in terms of its relationship with representation of the present, representation of the journey that we are going to, from thinking about computer games differently, which level you are in and what point and how incredibly important that remains culturally General visitor vox pop

There are huge differences yet at the same time seem at the point of contact between thought processes and not necessarily ways of life but different aspects of ways of life, the agriculture way of life... all these people copying, think of the monks copying out of the bible, it whizzed through my mind, we’re not quite so divorced from various civilisations as you may think we are General visitor vox pop
Morris Hargreaves McIntyre is a creative and intelligent arts management consultancy working in the interests of audience and organisational development.

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